

University of Groningen

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Published in:
Dead Sea Discoveries

DOI:
[10.1163/15685179-12341447](https://doi.org/10.1163/15685179-12341447)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Final author's version (accepted by publisher, after peer review)

Publication date:
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Popovic, M. (2017). Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Together: Reading Culture in Ancient Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Mediterranean Context. *Dead Sea Discoveries*, 24(3), 447-470.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/15685179-12341447>

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Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Together: Reading Culture in Ancient Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Mediterranean Context

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Abstract

This article focuses on reading culture as an aspect of the Dead Sea Scrolls textual community in its ancient Mediterranean context. On the basis of comparative evidence, the article approaches reading in ancient Judaism as a multi-dimensional and deeply social activity by taking reading aloud, writing, and memorizing as intertwined practices occurring in group reading events. The evidence discussed, such as from Philo of Alexandria, the first-century CE Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem, and 1QS 6:6–8, reflects certain aspects of reading cultures shared between different Jewish communities in the ancient Mediterranean during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. In addition, it is argued that features such as scribal marks in manuscripts, evidence such as the writing of excerpts, manuscripts such as 4Q159 and 4Q265, or note-taking in 4Q175 and other such manuscripts should be considered within the context of the ancient procedure of reading by intellectual or scholarly readers. Moreover, the article suggests that the Genesis Apocryphon actually preserves a glimpse of the scrolls' elite reading culture described in a text from Hellenistic-period Judaea.

Keywords

Reading culture – textual community – Rule of the Community (1QS) – Philo of Alexandria – Genesis Apocryphon – Dead Sea Scrolls

Introduction

This article expands my initial approach to the scrolls as material artefacts that point to the activities of a textual community in ancient Judaea,¹ by focusing on reading culture as an aspect of this textual community in its ancient Mediterranean context. On the basis of comparative evidence from Philo of Alexandria, thus far neglected with regard to ancient reading culture, and William Johnson's work on Roman elite reading communities, I suggest that, in addition to the reading aloud of texts, the writing and memorizing of texts within deeply social contexts needs to be taken into account too as part of ancient Judaeian reading culture.

Thus, I approach ancient Judaeian reading culture by taking reading, writing, and memorizing as intertwined practices occurring in group reading events. This may also shed new light on the production of some manuscripts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as 4Q159 (Ordinances), 4Q265 (Miscellaneous Rules), or 4Q175 (Testimonia) and other similar examples of note-taking manuscripts. Moreover, I suggest that in the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon we find a glimpse of the scrolls' elite reading culture

* The research for this article was carried out within the ERC Starting Grant of the European Research Council (EU Horizon 2020): The Hands that Wrote the Bible: Digital Palaeography and Scribal Culture of the Dead Sea Scrolls (HandsandBible #640497).

¹ Mladen Popović, "Qumran as Scroll Storehouse in Times of Crisis? A Comparative Perspective on Judaeian Desert Manuscript Collections," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 551–94, at 585–92; idem, "The Ancient 'Library' of Qumran between Urban and Rural Culture," in *The Scrolls from Qumran and the Concept of a Library*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassén, STDJ 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 155–67, at 161, 166–67.

actually described in a text from Hellenistic-period Judaea, referring explicitly to reading aloud and studying, perhaps even to a dinner setting, but not to writing and memorizing.

The evidence that is available argues against segregating analytically our sources into isolated cultural pockets. Instead, I argue that the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Judaea in the Hellenistic and early Roman period, should be studied as part of ancient Mediterranean reading cultures that share similarities but also have differences according to their particular sociocultural contexts. The thus far neglected evidence from Philo is important as it not only connects well with evidence for Roman elite reading communities but also reflects certain aspects of reading culture that were shared between different Jewish communities in the ancient Mediterranean, in Egypt and Judaea, during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, which can be inferred from comparing Philo, the Theodotus inscription, and 1QS 6:7. For this reason, the evidence from Philo is important for understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In addition, evidence is discussed for understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls as reflecting an intellectual textual community that shared some traits with scholarly communities elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean. The Judaean Desert manuscript evidence, I have argued previously, indicates that the level of engagement with texts varied between actors positioned differently on the social scale of Judaean society in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. I have characterized the movement behind the Dead Sea Scrolls as consisting of Jewish intellectuals or scholars who were deeply engaged with their ancestral traditions, and with a high level of sophistication.² The people that were behind the scrolls from the caves near Qumran presumably differed from other users and owners of literary texts in the area. How then were scholarly readers different in their use of, and interaction with, literary texts from these other users? Features such as scribal marks in manuscripts, evidence such as the writing of excerpts, the nature of manuscripts such as 4Q159 and 4Q265, or note-taking in 4Q175 and other such manuscripts, I argue, should be considered within the context of the ancient procedure of reading as a multi-dimensional and social activity of intellectual or scholarly readers.

The observations by William Johnson that ancient reading culture differs from the reading-from-a-printed-book model familiar to us today are important for approaching the issue of reading culture in ancient Judaea as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls.³ Johnson's focus on the sociocultural contextualization for reading events within specific elite Roman reading communities is not to deny individual reading to have taken place but to acknowledge and emphasize that reading and other text-centred events commonly occurred within deeply social contexts, much more so than in our own culture.⁴ As Johnson tries to think through the mechanics of group reading events, he stresses that the ancient reader had been trained to experience reading, and especially reading aloud, in ways that are utterly unfamiliar to modern perceptions.⁵ Johnson's observations with regard to the sociocultural contextualization of ancient Roman reading culture within elite communities are important for the contextualization of the reading culture behind the scrolls. Such an approach opens up

² See also Mladen Popović, "Sharing and Hiding Knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Graeco-Roman Judaea: Multilingualism, Multiscripturalism, and Knowledge Transfer," in *Sharing and Hiding Religious Knowledge: Strategies of Acculturation in Early Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Traditions*, ed. Mladen Popović, Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, and Clare Wilde, forthcoming.

³ William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Reading Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9.

⁴ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 120.

⁵ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 123.

the possibility for understanding communal reading in the scrolls not only in the context of liturgy and ritual, but—reading being a social and multi-dimensional activity—also in the context of group study, discussion, learning, writing, and memorization.

Textual Community in Hellenistic-Roman Judaea

The medievalist Brian Stock introduced the term textual community in 1983.⁶ He had in mind “groups of people whose social activities are centred around texts, or more precisely, around a literary interpreter of them.”⁷ Stock defined textual communities as micro-societies organized around the common, shared understanding of texts. He used this concept in his analysis of new groups that emerged around the reading and study of religious texts in eleventh-century Europe in connection with rising numbers of literacy. Stock elaborated the concept of textual community in later publications and argued that, “The rise of a more literate society ... increased the number of authors, readers, and copiers of texts everywhere in Europe, and, as a consequence, the number of persons engaged in the study of texts for the purpose of changing the behavior of the individual or group.”⁸ The ethical appeal to a change in behaviour is an important aspect. Such a perspective presupposes a community of shared norms and values. The engagement with texts was “not just about interpretation, expounding, or clarifying, or explaining the text.”⁹ Stock argued that the appropriation of ethical insights was done through reading. Reading was thought to be a source of moral instruction. The act of reading together formed the common and shared norms and values of a community. Individuals became part of a community through common practices of reading and studying. To be sure, not all individuals in such groups or textual communities were able to read, but they took part in discursive groups led by specialized interpreters that were literate.¹⁰

Scholars have used the concept of “textual community” also before, to refer to ancient groups, Jewish, Christian, or otherwise, but these analyses were aimed at a more general and abstract level.¹¹ However, when it comes to textual communities in ancient Judaea in the Greek and early Roman period, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide us with a unique vantage point to study the phenomenon in real life as it were.¹²

⁶ *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁷ Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 522.

⁸ Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 23.

⁹ Brian Stock, “Ethics and the Humanities: Some Lessons of Historical Experience,” *New Literary History* 36 (2005): 1–17, at 16.

¹⁰ See also Jan Swearingen, “What is the Text? Who is the Reader?” *New Literary History* 38 (2007): 145–61.

¹¹ See, e.g., Robin Lane Fox, “Literacy and Power in Early Christianity,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 126–48; Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*, JSJSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 126–27; Tom Thatcher, “Literacy, Textual Communities, and Josephus’ Jewish War,” *JSJ* 29 (1998): 123–42; H. Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews and Christians* (London: Routledge, 2000); Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 14; Kim Haines-Eitzen, “Textual Communities in Late Antique Christianity,” in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 246–57; Maren R. Niehoff, “Did the Timaeus Create a Textual Community?” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 47 (2007): 161–91.

¹² See also Charlotte Hempel, “Reflections on Literacy, Textuality, and Community in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Is There a Text in This Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*, ed. Ariel Feldman, Maria Cioatǎ, and Charlotte Hempel, STDJ 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 69–82, at 75–76.

For at least two reasons the concept of textual community, I suggest, is useful for understanding the manuscript evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first reason is simply that we are dealing with actual manuscripts as material artefacts. The collection of manuscripts from the caves near the ancient settlement of Qumran points in any case to a social activity of collecting texts that has taken place; at a certain point (which may or may not have happened on several occasions), no matter what went on before, manuscripts were taken to the caves and left there. The archaeological deposition context precludes definite conclusions about the lived context of the manuscripts, that is, where they were and how they were used before they were put in the caves. One possibility is to envision a lived, sociocultural context in which the presence of a substantial number of literary texts at a certain place, be that the settlement of Qumran or elsewhere, drew in people who through common study and common life formed a shared frame of reference.¹³ Reading and studying texts together would then have contributed to a continuous formation and discipline of identity and community. While people were formed through social activities centred around texts, these people would also have formed the collection of texts: they produced scrolls, collected and shared them, and took them with them. In a lived context, texts would have entered and left such a group.

The second reason to use the concept of textual community is that in the Rule of the Community (1QS) the continuous study of texts is presented as a constituent element of the community's collective life:

And in the place where the Ten are (together) there should not be absent a man to interpret the law, day and night, continually, one relieving another. And the Many shall be on watch together for a third of every night of the year in order to read from the book, interpret the regulation, and bless together. (1QS 6:6–8)

ואל ימש במקום אשר יהיו שם העשרה איש דורש בתורה יומם ולילה תמיד {על יפות} <חליפות> איש לרעהו
והרבים ישקודו ביחד את שלישית כול לילות השנה לקרוא בספר ולדרוש משפט ולברך ביחד

The text expresses a group's self-understanding in which texts, reading and interpreting texts together, in relation to liturgical practices, played an important role. This emic perspective aligns well with the etic definition of a textual community as an interpretative community whose social activities are centred around texts and the common understanding of texts. In other words, a textual community is a social entity where texts—materially and contentwise—take centre stage. Framing the evidence from the scrolls as reflecting an intellectual textual community does not imply totality in that all people involved would have been literate—this will probably not have been the case (see below).

In light of the current debate about the nature of the collection and its relationship to a social reality of the scrolls' owners, some reflections on how I use here the concepts of collection and community—in textual community—are in order. Whether we are dealing with one collection or more than one collection, I use collection here in an open sense—not fixed and fenced off but capable of encompassing a plurality of possibilities as to real-life circumstances—to refer to the manuscripts from

¹³ If we compare the large number of literary manuscripts from the caves near Qumran with the much smaller number of literary manuscripts from sites elsewhere in the Judaean Desert, it seems that a higher number of literary texts from Qumran once existed together and attracted more people than the one or two to three literary manuscripts from other caves in the Judaean Desert or on top of Masada which presumably were owned and hidden by individual families.

the caves near Qumran. And whether we assume one group of users at one location, a larger movement at different locations, or diverse groups behind more than one collection, I use textual community here as a general frame of reference to a social entity of ancient owners and users (plural) of the manuscripts. Such an approach allows for mapping relationships between texts, clusters of texts, and various settings of interrelations between individual texts, clusters, and “the collection or collections as a whole.” The point is that we do not know the historical reality, the lived reality, behind the manuscripts in relation to each other and in relation to their ancient handlers. If we work from a notion of the Yahad or the Qumran community too easily, we may miss the circularity in our reasoning as such notions are based on a perception and selection of certain texts that are projected on “the whole,” and this precludes the possibility for seeing new connections.¹⁴

The two reasons I gave for using the concept of textual community to assess the sociocultural contextualization of the Dead Sea Scrolls combine a material approach to the manuscripts as archaeological artefacts with considerations based on the content of the texts. Thus, there are multiple entries to access the textual community of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The activities of writing and copying are two aspects that would have been part of the social practices of this textual community, while reading was another aspect of such social practices. In this paper, I am concerned with what can be inferred, from texts and manuscripts, about the reading culture of the scrolls’ textual community.

Reading, or To Attend a Social Event

Different from Greek and Roman evidence, there is little in ancient Jewish texts that describes the act of reading in detail. There are references to the reading of letters,¹⁵ as in cuneiform texts,¹⁶ but the activity of reading of books seems to be a different matter and is not much commented upon.¹⁷ What evidence there is points to such text-centred events occurring within deeply social contexts,¹⁸ which is not to say that there are no examples for reading being done alone or silently.¹⁹

There are references to reading from scripture in a communal and ritual or liturgical setting, such as in the synagogue.²⁰ In the proclamation of the Greek

¹⁴ Cf. also Årstein Justnes, “On Being a ‘Librarian’: Labels, Categories, and Classifications,” in *The Scrolls from Qumran and the Concept of a Library*, 15–29, at 28.

¹⁵ See, e.g., 2 Kgs 5:6–7; 19:14 (Isa 37:14); Ezra 4:18, 23; Jer 29:29; 1 Macc 5:14; 10:7; 14:9; 1 En. 13:4; Let. Aris. 42; Philo, *Embassy* 203, 209, 253–254, 331; Josephus, *J.W.* 4.617; *Ant.* 13.39; 17.194; 18.164; *Life* 260.

¹⁶ See, e.g., the references in A. Kirk Grayson, “Murmuring in Mesopotamia,” in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. Andrew R. George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 301–8.

¹⁷ With regard to cuneiform reading culture, Dominique Charpin, *Reading and Writing in Babylon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 67, remarks: “In Mesopotamia, there was no ‘free’ reading: no one is ever depicted reading for pleasure.”

¹⁸ See, e.g., 2 Kgs 22:10 (cf. 2 Chr 34:18, 24); Jer 36; Esth 6:1; Bar 1:3, 14.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Life* 217–224. Regarding the famous passage from Augustine on Ambrose’s silent reading, the issue seems not to be about silent reading but about not sharing and commenting on what one reads as the sociocultural context seems to require in that particular circumstance, which is also at play in the passage from Josephus referred to here; see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 4–9, 91–92, 114–17, 148–53.

²⁰ Luke 4 is, of course, a central source on such public reading. For this text and others, see, e.g., Charles Perrot, “The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin J. Mulder and Harry Sysling, CRINT 2/1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 137–59; Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “Reading Ritual with Genette: Paratextual and Metatextual Aspects of the Bible in Ritual Performances,”

translation in the Letter of Aristeas (§§308–316), the reading aloud of the law to the people, together with the audience's consent, makes the text authoritative and binding.²¹ There is the earlier reference to Ezra's public reading of the law in Neh 8:1–8,²² in conjunction with interpretation of the book being carried out so that the audience understood the reading. Also, blessing and worship are explicitly mentioned as practices that are part of the sociocultural contextualization of the public reading event by Ezra. As to 1QS 6:6–8, George Brooke asks whether the passage is in some way imitative of the processes described in Neh 8.²³ In addition to the possible intertextual relationship between the passage from 1QS 6 and Neh 8, there is possibly also Neh 9:3 to take into account.

When describing the Essenes in his *That Every Good Person is Free* (75–91), Philo of Alexandria dwells on how teaching, reading, and interpretation takes place with them, especially on the Sabbath—although, as Joan Taylor remarked, perhaps he is describing what he knew of all pious Jews:²⁴

In these (the laws) they are instructed at all other times, but particularly on the seventh days. For that day has been set apart to be kept holy and on it they abstain from all other work and proceed to sacred spots which they call synagogues. There, arranged in rows according to their ages, the younger below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ears. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood. (*Good Person* 81–82 [Colson, LCL])

Philo's description of how one of those present in the gathering reads (ἀναγιγνώσκω) the books and another person interprets and instructs (ἀναδιδάσκω), I suggest, parallels the first-century CE Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem, where it says that the synagogue was built for the reading of the law (εἰς ἀνά[γ]νω[σ]τ[ῆ]ν νόμου) and for instruction of the commandments (εἰς [δ]ιδάχ[η]ν ἐντολῶν).²⁵ Furthermore, the elements of interpretation and instruction in the commandments in Philo and in the Theodotus inscription parallel 1QS 6:7 which mentions the interpretation of the regulation, while the reading of the book in 1QS 6:7 may mean the law but need not be limited to that (see below).

When discussing the Therapeutae, Philo makes clear that with them too text-centred events occur within a deeply social context. Referring to the Sabbath assembly, Philo says:

in *On the Fringe of Commentary: Metatextuality in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Cultures*, ed. Sydney H. Aufrère, Philip S. Alexander, and Zlatko Pleše, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 232 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 195–217.

²¹ Benjamin G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas: 'Aristeas to Philocrates' or 'On the Translation of the Law of the Jews'*, *Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 442–44.

²² Cf. Exod 24; Deut 31; Josh 8; 2 Kgs 23 // 2 Chr 34; Neh 13.

²³ George Brooke, "Reading, Searching and Blessing: A Functional Approach to Scriptural Interpretation in the תנ"ך," in *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward*, ed. R. Timothy McLay, *Library of Second Temple Studies* 83 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 140–56, at 143 n. 10.

²⁴ Joan Taylor, "Philo of Alexandria on the Essenes: A Case Study on the Use of Classical Sources in Discussions of the Qumran-Essene Hypothesis," *Studia Philonica Annual* 19 (2007): 1–28, at 8. See also Philo, *Dreams* 2.127.

²⁵ CIIP 9; Hannah M. Cotton et al., eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae: Volume I: Jerusalem, Part 1: 1–704* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 53–56. See also Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder, and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book*, *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 52–54.

And indeed they do always assemble and sit together, most of them in silence except when it is the practice to add something to signify approval of what is read. But some priest who is present or one of the elders reads the holy laws to them and expounds them point by point till about the late afternoon, when they depart having gained both expert knowledge of the holy laws and considerable advance in piety. (*Hypothetica* 7.13 [Colson, LCL])

What is often remarked about this passage, is the element of silence. But it warrants emphasis that here too, when the Therapeutae assemble together, the reading is done aloud. Those present are in general silent, except when they speak to signal their assent to what is being read. The audience can only respond if the reading is done aloud.²⁶ The reading is done by leaders in the community, such as priests or elders, providing interpretation (ἐξηγέσθαι) of each of the sacred laws separately.

In light of the evidence for public reading from scripture on the Sabbath,²⁷ scholars have debated with regard to the Dead Sea Scrolls whether reading from scripture on the Sabbath is prohibited or rather required in 4Q251, 4Q264a, and 4Q421.²⁸ But it seems that there is no reason to reconstruct these texts as to contain a prohibition against reading on the Sabbath.²⁹

The passage quoted above from 1QS 6:6–8 emphasizes the importance of reading together.³⁰ Not much consideration has been given to this specific element in the passage, as Brooke recently noted.³¹ The settings of liturgical, ritual, or Sabbath reading³² seem different from what is implied in 1QS 6:6–8 as this passage assumes group reading and study every day of the week. What kind of reading then may be implied in 1QS 6:7?

Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Go Together

Before turning to the kind of reading implied in 1QS 6:7, I reflect briefly on what would have been read, also in light of previous references to communal reading of the law in Philo and in the Theodotus inscription (see above). In other words, what does ספר, “book,” refer to in 1QS 6:7? Lawrence Schiffman has argued that ספר has become virtually a term for a biblical book in the Hebrew scrolls, although also Jubilees, ספר הגן, and possibly the War Scroll are referred to by use of ספר. In the Aramaic scrolls, as in Jubilees, the kinds of books that are referred to by the term ספר encompass a broader category of texts, not limited to the law or scripture in a canonical sense from

²⁶ Cf. also the reference to the Letter of Aristeas above.

²⁷ In addition to the discussion in Perrot, “The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue,” see also Thatcher, “Literacy, Textual Communities, and Josephus’ *Jewish War*,” 128–29.

²⁸ See, e.g., Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “Sabbath Halakha and Worship in 4QWays of Righteousness: 4Q421 11 and 13+2+8 par 4Q264a 1-2,” *RevQ* 18/71 (1998): 359–72; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “More on 4Q264A (4QHalakha A or 4QWays of Righteousness?),” *RevQ* 19/75 (2000): 453–56; Vered Noam and Elisha Qimron, “A Qumran Composition of Sabbath Laws and Its Contribution to the Study of Early Halakha,” *DSD* 16 (2009): 55–96; Richard Hidary, “Revisiting the Sabbath Laws in 4Q264a and Their Contribution to Early Halakha,” *DSD* 22 (2015): 68–92.

²⁹ Hidary, “Revisiting the Sabbath Laws in 4Q264a,” 80–88.

³⁰ See also Hidary, “Revisiting the Sabbath Laws in 4Q264a,” 87, n. 84.

³¹ Brooke, “Reading, Searching and Blessing,” 142.

³² I ignore now the possible reference to a ritual-martial context for reading aloud, as in 2 Macc 8:23 where Judah Maccabee is said to have appointed Eleazar to read aloud (παραναγινώσκω) from the holy book in the ensuing battle with Nicanor, or in the War Scroll where the High Priest is depicted as reading a prayer aloud (1QM 15:4–5) as part of his encouragement of the army before the battle.

a later perspective.³³ Thus, according to 1QS 6:7, what would have been read? In other words, what does ספר refer to? The answer is that in 1QS 6:7, as in Jubilees, the Aramaic scrolls, and possibly the War Scroll, ספר may encompass a broader conception of a book or books and refer to books in general, not limited to the law or “biblical” books alone.

André Lemaire and Brooke have considered “reading” in the Dead Sea Scrolls in more detail, with Brooke taking 1QS 6:6–8 as the point of departure and central text for his exploration. Lemaire approaches reading in the scrolls within a sectarian educational context. He distinguishes between private and public reading. Lemaire explains the existence of multiple manuscript copies of the same composition in the collection by assuming a situation where reading was undertaken individually. The public reading would have been practiced aloud, while the private reading would have been done by murmuring meditatively in a low voice for oneself the text from a manuscript. As to the murmuring, Lemaire also refers here to the designation ספר הגו.³⁴ In light of the evidence for abecedaries and writing exercises from the settlement of Qumran (KhQ 161, 2207, 2289, 2553), Lemaire emphasizes that reading and writing go together in connection with study and education.³⁵

Brooke distinguishes between the actual oral performance of a text, word for word, by reading aloud from a manuscript, on the one hand, and the recitation from memory of a scriptural passage on the other hand. On the basis of his consideration of those passages in sectarian compositions that use the verb קרא together with an overall conception of study in the sectarian communities, Brooke suggests that reading was not just a passive process of reproducing—through repetition or rehearsal—the text, but involved some active participation in the realisation of the text—through oral performance in which comments and glosses could be offered. Brooke appeals to Lemaire’s suggestion that within a sectarian educational context writing would have been an important part of formal instruction.³⁶ Reading and writing go together in such a way that possibly “the wide range of forms of the Torah in the Qumran library is ... a reflection of a reading process as much as it is the result of creative scribal activity, as those writing such scrolls actively participated in the production of the written form of the text.”³⁷ This means that, “If in the actual production of written texts there was a role for the dictation or reading aloud of the text as part of the process, then in the oral

³³ Lawrence H. Schiffman, “‘Memory and Manuscript’: Books, Scrolls, and the Tradition of the Qumran Texts,” in *New Perspectives on Old Texts: Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 9–11 January, 2005*, ed. Esther G. Chazon and Betsy Halpern-Amaru, STDJ 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 133–50, at 140–43, 148–49. See also Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “Bücherlesen im Jachad Qumrans: Himmlische Bücher zwischen Katechese, kollektivem Studium und esoterischer Geheimschrift,” in *Metatexte: Erzählungen von schrifttragenden Artefakten in der alttestamentlichen und mittelalterlichen Literatur*, ed. Friedrich-Emanuel Focken and Michael R. Ott, *Materiale Textkulturen* 15 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 75–95, at 78–79.

³⁴ André Lemaire, “Lire, écrire, étudier à Qoumrân et ailleurs,” in *Qoumrân et le Judaïsme du tournant de notre ère: Actes de la Table Ronde, Collège de France, 16 novembre 2004*, ed. André Lemaire and Simon C. Mimouni, *Collection de la Revue des Études Juives* 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 63–79, at 66, 78. See also Brooke, “Reading, Searching and Blessing,” 145; Jonathan Ben-Dov, “The Book of HGY and Ancient Reading Practices,” in *Is There a Text in This Cave? 423–37*. For evidence from cuneiform culture, see Grayson, “Murmuring in Mesopotamia”; Charpin, *Reading and Writing in Babylon*, 41–42.

³⁵ Lemaire, “Lire, écrire, étudier à Qoumrân,” 69, 71.

³⁶ Brooke, “Reading, Searching and Blessing,” 142–47.

³⁷ Brooke, “Reading, Searching and Blessing,” 146.

performance, the reading of a text before its study, similar interventions might be made as in those scribal processes.”³⁸

I would like to follow up on these observations by arguing that reading, writing, and memorizing were, on occasion, interlinked in the scrolls’ textual community, informing the kind of reading implied by 1QS 6:7. I will argue this on the basis of comparative evidence from Philo of Alexandria and Roman elite reading communities in the first and second centuries CE as analysed by Johnson, starting with the latter. Because Johnson’s argument may be perceived as somewhat counter-intuitive, I engage here with his work in some more detail.

Johnson emphasizes the difference between what he terms modern-day reading culture and ancient reading culture in terms of sociocultural contextualization: the deeply social nature of ancient reading culture marks this difference most clearly. By studying how texts and readers, particularly groups of readers, interact, Johnson argues that a particular reading community—real, constructed, or imagined—finds “self-validation ... in the negotiated construction of meaning ... through texts deemed important to a shared sense of culture and cultural attainment.”³⁹ He surveys evidence, also in relation to bookroll culture, that stresses “the need for thorough reading, the need for rereading, the requirement of worthwhile reading, the need to understand in meticulous detail before internalizing what is read.”⁴⁰ The general idea is that of the active reader or the intensive reader, for which Johnson recovers the details in particular sociocultural contexts, arguing that the habitudes of reading are interlocked as a system and form a reading culture that makes sense in its own terms.⁴¹ The pursuit of literary matters (*studia*) was not only notionally central to the Roman elite reading communities that Johnson analyses, but also an important determinant of real-life advantages, social and material.⁴² *Studia* also formed a core activity of what the community gathered for to do: “[A]ttending recitations, participating in more private readings where critical exchange is expected, giving written critiques on manuscripts in progress, working by mouth and by letter ... to negotiate the value of one another’s literary efforts. It is striking how often activities that might seem obviously solitary to us in fact were not.”⁴³ Johnson’s focus on reading in social contexts, especially in the form of group reading events, sheds new light on Roman elite reading experiences but is also directly relevant for the understanding of the scrolls because the comparative evidence enables us to rethink the relationship between reading, writing, and also memorizing.

In reading aloud, the right pronunciation or recitation was important as this affected how accurately the meaning of the texts could be grasped, not only in Greek and Latin bookrolls because of the *scriptio continua*,⁴⁴ but also, one can imagine, in non-vocalized Hebrew and Aramaic scrolls (see below on 4QD). Discussing Quintilian, Johnson notes that “reading aloud is intimately tied up with learning the phrasing—for everyone, not just budding orators—and phrasing is, naturally, linked with accurate apprehension of the meaning of the text.”⁴⁵ Looking at Pliny the Younger’s depiction of the custom of recitation, Johnson argues that Pliny’s emphasis on recitation has to do with particular ideas about dutiful, proper behaviour appropriate for those in Pliny’s

³⁸ Brooke, “Reading, Searching and Blessing,” 147.

³⁹ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 12.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 31.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 200–201.

⁴² Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 147.

⁴³ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 57–58.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 20, 22–23, 28–29.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 29.

constructed reading community.⁴⁶ With Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, Johnson explores the dynamics of reading culture within an extremely text-centred and bookish reading community of learned commentators where the very experience of hearing the words when read aloud to the group and "the way in which a small section of text is held up by the group to intense scrutiny, repeatedly, interactively, and at length, is hard to parallel in modern society."⁴⁷ Discussing *Attic Nights* 13.31, Johnson points out how the right pronunciation of the text, understanding the text's meaning, and gaining knowledge are interlinked:

At the technical level, one must be able to pronounce the words accurately, of course, but also to command the phrasing and modulation necessary to bring out the meaning. ... To do so requires much more than technical training for a difficult text. ... The group in this scene strongly endorses the view that *understanding* the text is a necessary preliminary to the sort of reading here practiced—that is, reading aloud to the group with a view to questions and discussion. To read "with a knowledgeable voice" (*voce scita*) encompasses, then, not simply "well-trained" but also "understanding the text" and thus "knowing how to make clear the sense when reading to others."⁴⁸

The point of group reading events and reading aloud in Gellius's *Attic Nights* is to have learned discussion and disputation. Recitation was not just performance; it entailed much more. The text must be read over and over, so as to gain deep knowledge of the text that leads to ever more subtle reflections, making the text memorable.⁴⁹ Interruption of the recitation of the text was cultivated for questions, comments, and discussion.⁵⁰

In the Damascus Document manuscripts, the importance of the right pronunciation when reading aloud comes to the fore in the particular context of priestly disqualifications of those with various types of speech impediments, such as a soft or hurried voice or the inability to speak in such a way as not to divide his words. Such priests were not allowed to read from the book of the law so as to preclude an error in a capital matter (4Q266 5 ii 1–3 // 4Q267 5 iii 3–5 // 4Q273 2 1). Here, the particular attitude toward correct pronunciation is informed by a broader theological concern about physical defects jeopardizing obedience to the law.⁵¹ Still, I wonder about the concrete reading event envisaged by this passage from 4QD. The priest's tone of voice referred to may imply a group reading event and reading aloud, as also the staccato voice that inhibits proper word division. How do these instances of imperfect reading relate to the priest's understanding of the text and that of his audience?⁵² One possible option is that the reading envisaged is on the level of so-called simple reading, the ability to pronounce the text correctly, without much concern for understanding its meaning. Another option is to assume some level of literary literacy, as distinct from, for example, functional literacy, for a priest implying a higher level of reading so as to

⁴⁶ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 42–53, and 60 for Pliny the Elder.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 122–24, the quote is from 124.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 130.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 126.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 126, 149.

⁵¹ Charlotte Hempel, *The Qumran Rule Texts in Context: Collected Studies*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 154 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 179, 220. See also eadem, *The Laws of the Damascus Document: Sources, Tradition, and Redaction*, STDJ 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 39–41.

⁵² The three copies of 4QD are fragmentary, but 4Q267 5 iii 2–3 possibly refers also to those with visual impairment and those not quick to understand to be excluded from reading the law.

understand the meaning of the text. The implied fear for an error in a capital matter to be made seems to favour the latter understanding, unless it is about “performative pronunciation only” in case of reading from the law, which, however, begs the question what exactly is meant by an error in a capital matter.

Looking at recitation or reading aloud in a particular sociocultural context may reveal the particular cultural values at stake, and thus contribute to our understanding of a particular reading culture that obtained in antiquity. The comparative evidence from the Roman elite reading groups studied by Johnson suggests that recitation or reading aloud during group reading and study as implied by 1QS 6:6–8 was not merely a performative event but that indeed there was a reading community behind (some of) the Dead Sea Scrolls that cultivated interruption for questions, remarks, and debate, or, as suggested by Brooke, to offer comments and glosses, similar to interventions made in scribal processes.

Such a reading culture may also have shaped the production of written texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the specific commentary texts called pesharim, envisaging written versions to be read aloud, debated, and further adapted, reworked, and added to over time.⁵³ Scholars seem to treat reading as a distinct phase of study, one that precedes writing. However, reading aloud in a group and creatively writing texts could on occasion have gone together. The evidence Johnson surveys shows that also in group reading events, when texts were read aloud, writing could be an interlinked activity. One of the forms that such writing could take was that of excerpting texts when reading.

In a world where textual resources were scarce, excerpted texts and the writing of excerpts were elements of a culture of sharing, especially sharing works that were difficult to attain, often related to claims to special and exclusive access to obscure sources, archives, and rare books. In the Roman elite reading communities studied by Johnson, the rareness of resources required the sharing of books, if knowledge was to be maintained. If texts were indeed both physically and notionally at the centre of social activities, the practical access to the data as well as the opportunity for interaction and disputation among peers were essential to a reading or textual community.⁵⁴

The copying and collecting of extracts reflects the nature of reading in antiquity, as David Konstan has argued. Thus, the writing of excerpts was not only an element of a culture of sharing, but excerpting was also the normal mode of reading through a scroll. What people did when they read was to note down and to make extracts of passages that interested them.⁵⁵ This too could happen as a group activity, such as in a scene where, together with others, Gellius collects and compares passages from Greek and Latin texts, a sort of scholarly project.⁵⁶

⁵³ See Gregory H. Snyder, “Naughts and Crosses: Peshar Manuscripts and Their Significance for Reading Practices at Qumran,” *DSD* 7 (2000): 26–48; George J. Brooke, “Physicality, Paratextuality and Peshar Habakkuk,” in *On the Fringe of Commentary*, 175–93; Pieter B. Hartog, “‘The Final Priests of Jerusalem’ and ‘The Mouth of the Priest’: Eschatology and Literary History in Peshar Habakkuk,” *DSD* 24 (2017): 59–80; Jutta Jokiranta, “Quoting, Writing, and Reading: Authority in *Peshar Habakkuk* from Qumran,” in *Between Canonical and Apocryphal Texts: Processes of Reception, Rewriting, and Interpretation in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Jörg Frey, Claire Clivaz, and Tobias Nicklas, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 92–95, 118, 132–135, 153–56.

⁵⁵ David Konstan, “Excerpting as a Reading Practice,” in *Thinking Through Excerpts: Studies on Stobaeus*, ed. Gretchen Reydam-Schils (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 9–22; Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 119.

⁵⁶ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 121–22.

As is well known, the Dead Sea Scrolls preserve evidence for excerpting texts and noting down or marking passages of interest while reading, most notably for scriptural texts,⁵⁷ but possible evidence for excerpting non-scriptural texts has also been argued for.⁵⁸ Christopher Stanley understands 4Q176 (Tanḥumim) against the background of Graeco-Roman sources as preserving the contents of an earlier compilation or excerpt, originating from the actual product of a note-taking session.⁵⁹ The X-shaped markings in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa^a) could be the result of noting down or marking passages of interest to the readers, which, Lutz Doering suggests, may be a first step of what culminates in gathering excerpted text passages.⁶⁰ The hook-shaped signs marking off the four passages in 4Q175 (Testimonia) are similar in form to those used in Greek excerpted texts, which may point to common technicalities of excerpting.⁶¹ That this tradition of excerpting Hebrew texts was not limited to ancient Judaea is demonstrated by the Nash Papyrus from Egypt, where also a tradition existed of Jewish excerpt collections in Greek, mostly non-scriptural texts.⁶² With regard to the textual character of the excerpted and abbreviated texts from Qumran Emanuel Tov emphasizes their most striking feature to be that, with the exception of some of the *tefillin* and *mezuzot*, none of them is close to the Masoretic text form.⁶³ Also, in 4Q175 the scribe worked with texts of different textual traditions,⁶⁴ bringing the textual diversity together within one excerpt collection. These differences may be the result of a different approach to the text and a reflection of textual traditions beyond that of the Masoretic tradition.⁶⁵ The purpose and use of these excerpted texts probably differed between the various exemplars: some might have had a didactic purpose, others might have been used for study, in ritual, or liturgical settings. What ties them together, however, I suggest, is the possibility of their common origin being the result of a reading culture in which reading, writing, and memorizing were interlinked, and writing and memorizing were not mutually exclusive in terms of oral versus written culture.

Again, the evidence from Roman elite reading communities may be instructive to understand the intertwined nature of reading, writing, and memorizing, also as a group activity, in reading or textual communities. Discussing Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, Johnson argues against understanding memorization solely in terms of "oral culture," but instead as an activity fundamentally tied to the text, so much so that reading and memorizing are by habit intertwined.⁶⁶ Memorizing through reading

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Christopher D. Stanley, "The Importance of 4QTanḥumim (4Q176)," *RevQ* 15/60 (1992): 569–82; Emanuel Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran," in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays*, TSAJ 121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 27–41; Lutz Doering, "Excerpted Texts in Second Temple Judaism: A Survey of the Evidence," in *Selecta colligere, II: Beiträge zur Technik des Sammelns und Kompilierens griechischer Texte von der Antike bis zur Humanismus*, ed. Rosa M. Piccione and Matthias Perkams, Hellenica 18 (Allesandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2005), 1–38.

⁵⁸ Brent A. Strawn, "Excerpted 'Non-Biblical' Scrolls at Qumran? Background, Analogies, Function," in *Qumran Studies: New Approaches, New Questions*, ed. Michael T. Davis and Brent A. Strawn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 65–123.

⁵⁹ Stanley, "The Importance of 4QTanḥumim," 577–81.

⁶⁰ Doering, "Excerpted Texts in Second Temple Judaism," 20–21.

⁶¹ Doering, "Excerpted Texts in Second Temple Judaism," 32.

⁶² Doering, "Excerpted Texts in Second Temple Judaism," 4–18, 24–25; Annette Steudel, "Testimonia," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 936–38, at 938.

⁶³ Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts," 39, 40.

⁶⁴ Doering, "Excerpted Texts in Second Temple Judaism," 32.

⁶⁵ Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts," 41.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 118–19.

probably was largely a solitary activity, but the presentation in Gellius also presents “a social context to reading that, however strange to us, could encourage routine memorizing: not only the vying with peers that sharpens the wits, but practical elements such as pauses for mental reflection, repetition of a phrase or sentence or entire passage as part of the group’s scrutiny of the text, or repeated rereadings in the context of the group.”⁶⁷

Of course, all these instances of high-level engagement with texts apply to elite readers, intellectuals, and scholars, but precisely for that reason the comparative evidence from the Roman elite reading communities may be instructive for recovering and scrutinizing details of ancient Jewish reading culture as evinced by the Dead Sea Scrolls—in as much as they reflect an intellectual textual community in Hellenistic-Roman Judaea. In order to underscore the relevance of this comparative evidence, and before I turn to the notion of scholarly readers in the scrolls specifically, the evidence from Philo of Alexandria, another intellectual reader from the Roman Empire, may again demonstrate the connectivity or commonality in some respects of various reading cultures across the ancient Mediterranean. Philo connects well with evidence for Roman elite reading communities. In addition, the evidence discussed above from Philo, the Theodotus inscription, and 1QS 6:7 demonstrates that Philo also reflects some shared aspects of reading culture realities in ancient Judaea. For this reason, the evidence from Philo is important for understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Reading, writing, and memorizing come together in the following passage from Philo’s *On the Special Laws* 4.160–167, which presents important evidence for understanding ancient Jewish reading culture within the ancient Mediterranean. This passage from Philo has—to my knowledge—never been referred to in discussions on reading and writing in ancient Judaism.⁶⁸ Taking his cue from the king’s law in Deut 17:18, Philo shares many details about the activities related to reading in his specific sociocultural context:

From the day that he enters upon his office the lawgiver bids him write out with his own hand this sequel to the laws which embraces them all in the form of a summary. He wishes hereby to have the ordinance cemented to the soul. For the thoughts swept away by the current ebb away from the mere reader, but are implanted and set fast in one who writes them out at leisure. For the mind can dwell at its ease on each point and fix itself upon it, and does not pass on to something else until it has securely grasped what goes before. (*Spec. Laws* 4.160 [Colson, LCL])

Mere reading aloud is not good enough to gain deep understanding of a text’s meaning. The vigour or rapidity of one’s utterance⁶⁹ stands in the way of truly understanding what was read (cf. the discussion above regarding correct pronunciation when reading aloud in the passage from 4QD). Deep understanding comes with writing.

The ruler in this passage is presented as Philo’s ideal reader, an active reader, continuously reading, writing, and memorizing, over and over again. He is exhorted that when he is writing he should, every day, read and study what he has written so that he memorizes what he has read, training his soul to apply itself to study (*Spec.*

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 120.

⁶⁸ But on learning and writing see Colette Sirat, *Writing as Handwork: A History of Handwriting in Mediterranean and Western Culture*, ed. Lenn Schramm, *Bibliologia* 24 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 449. I thank Eibert Tigchelaar for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁶⁹ φωνή; cf. also Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.539.

Laws 4.161). He should read his own writings and excerpts or records, not those of others, in order to study and train his soul to do so (4.162). It does not suffice to let the writing be done by others, although he could have used one of his assistants to do the writing. Also, he did not write what he was reading just “to fill up a volume, like those who copy out books for hire, or like men who practise their eyes and their hands, training the one to acuteness of sight, and the others to rapidity of writing.” He should, therefore, write himself, in order to impress immediately on his heart what he recorded in a book; to copy them into his soul, Philo says, and to impress the divine and unfading characters upon his mind (4.163). When one is writing, a text’s meaning is stamped upon one’s heart. Philo illustrates here how reading and memorizing are intertwined, mediated through writing; the text has taken centre stage and is engaged with wholeheartedly.

The details thus recovered regarding the activities relating to reading in Philo’s specific sociocultural context show that Philo shared some sociocultural aspects with particular Roman elite reading communities. The passage from Philo’s *On the Life of Abraham* 22–44 may serve as further illustration of a certain degree of commonality with respect to the ideal circumstances for study, away from the city. Here Philo sketches how the upright man prefers to leave his city house, so as to avoid the frequency of visitors, to spend his days in some lonely farm in the company of worthy books.⁷⁰ Although *studia*, the pursuit of literary matters, were often group activities, Johnson notes that some aspects of the literary effort were solitary, referring to Pliny the Younger going about his early morning writing at his Tuscan villa, but even here other people seem to have been involved in Pliny’s reading, writing, and study (*Ep.* 1.6; 8.1; 9.36).⁷¹ The country setting for study, learning, reading, and writing in these passages from Philo and Pliny recalls the combination of rural location of the settlement of Qumran and urban sociocultural context of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷²

Scholarly Readers in the Dead Sea Scrolls Textual Community

In this article, I have analysed clues about reading, from a range of sources and from an ancient Mediterranean comparative perspective, in order to recover details for understanding the reading culture of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as an element of that intellectual textual community.

Texts were notionally and physically central to the Dead Sea Scrolls textual community. Recently, Charlotte Hempel and Annette Yoshiko Reed too have emphasized the centrality as well as the physicality of texts for our understanding of textual engagement in ancient Judaea. Hempel argues that the scholarly mindset behind the text-centred movement to which the scrolls point “applies as much to the *production* of literary texts, including the Rules, as it does to the collection and ownership of such material.”⁷³ Reed argues for the textualization of knowledge in texts such as the Aramaic Astronomical Book against the background of an archival turn in the Hellenistic period in tandem with a new emphasis on the physicality of books that contributed to the invention of the library.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See also Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*, 132; David T. Runia, “The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandria,” *Journal for the History of Ideas* 61 (2000): 361–79, at 370.

⁷¹ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 58 n. 62.

⁷² Popović, “The Ancient ‘Library’ of Qumran between Urban and Rural Culture.”

⁷³ Hempel, “Reflections on Literacy,” 75–79 (quote from 77).

⁷⁴ Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Writing Jewish Astronomy in the Early Hellenistic Age: The Enochic Astronomical Book as Aramaic Wisdom and Archival Impulse,” *DSD* 24 (2017): 1–37, at 24–25, 34, 37. For evidence for earlier and contemporary Babylonian libraries, see, e.g., Eleanor Robson, “Do Not

The high level of literary engagement is not only visible in the many texts that creatively engage with earlier traditions, but also concretely in the presence of learned writings in the collection: not only commentary but also scientifically and technically informed writings. We may ask: How were scholarly readers different in their use of, and interaction with, literary texts from other kinds of users? The answer lies partly in the evidence for intensive, high-level textual engagement reflected materially and substantially in the scrolls. In this final section, I will briefly review some of this concrete evidence and draw a final conclusion.

Some of the evidence for scribal markings in the Dead Sea Scrolls⁷⁵ may to a certain degree parallel the marginal annotations by scholars in papyrus bookrolls, as known from, for example, Oxyrhynchus—however, not in the exact, technical sense (although see above Doering’s suggestion with regard to 4Q175), but in the sense of these markings being the product of multiple people’s work, suggesting scholarly activity to have been a group undertaking.⁷⁶ This scholarly activity may have been practised contemporarily or over time. The function of margin sigla is to signal passages of interest, or passages that need further attention.⁷⁷ For example, in Peshar Habakkuk from Qumran Cave 1 there is evidence that a reader inserted a scribal mark near the passage he found interesting or striking,⁷⁸ and in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran Cave 1 there is evidence that later scribes made a few corrections and inserted expansions.⁷⁹

I have argued previously that 4Q175 and other one-page lists, or rather scraps, such as 4Q339 (4QList of False Prophets ar) and 4Q340 (4QList of Netinim) represent personal scholarly notes. Also, if 4Q338 (4QGenealogical List?) that is written on the verso of 4Q201 (4QEn^a) is another example of such a note, the reuse of 4Q201 for the purpose of note-taking accords well with papyrological evidence for the reuse of writing material by scholars from elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world.⁸⁰ These one-page lists or scraps are in Hebrew and in Aramaic, and may exemplify in manuscript form a specific part of the reading culture behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, namely that of note-taking, for example, during a reading session, or in preparation of or during discussion. In other words, these manuscript remains may reflect the ancient procedure of reading as a multi-dimensional activity by intellectual or scholarly readers in the scrolls.

Looking at the letter of a number of scholars in POxy 18.2192, Johnson is struck by “the fact that the literarily inclined pursue their interests as a *group*, that what seems implied in the letter is not the individual scholar at work in his study, but *a circle of readers with scholarly interests*, and one with contacts in Oxyrhynchus, which as the metropolis, the principal city in the nome, has similar readers’ circles, along with other resources of interest to scholarly readers.” This “small community of literate men were actively searching out and sharing literary texts, commentaries, and works of

Disperse the Collection! Motivations and Strategies for Protecting Cuneiform Scholarship in the First Millennium BCE,” in *Sharing and Hiding Religious Knowledge*; Mladen Popović, “Networks of Scholars: The Transmission of Astronomical and Astrological Learning between Babylonians, Greeks and Jews,” in *Ancient Jewish Sciences and the History of Knowledge in Second Temple Literature*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Seth L. Sanders (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 151–91.

⁷⁵ Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, STDJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 178–218.

⁷⁶ Cf. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 185.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 187.

⁷⁸ See Hartog, “The Final Priests of Jerusalem,” 79.

⁷⁹ Eugene Ulrich, “The Developmental Composition of the Book of Isaiah: Light from 1QIsa^a on Additions in the MT,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 288–305, at 297–98, 300–301, 304–5; Eugene Ulrich and Peter W. Flint, DJD 32:61, 63.

⁸⁰ Popović, “Qumran as Scroll Storehouse,” 576–77.

reference, seeking to improve both the text and their knowledge of the text.”⁸¹ An interesting feature of the letter in POxy 18.2192 is the book list, signalling the scarcity of and the value attached to books.⁸² For ancient Judaism, there is no parallel documentary evidence, but 4QMMT, I suggest, might be taken as reflecting reading culture and a culture of sharing, if only in the form of exchanging a reading list, as it were. I do not want to debate here whether MMT should be seen as a letter, but in its presentation the text’s party (“we”) advises another party (“you”) in certain matters in order for the other party to gain a better understanding of the book of Moses, the books of the Prophets and David (4QMMT C10).

When one considers 4Q159 (Ordinances) and 4Q265 (Miscellaneous Rules), one is struck by the fact that these are no easy-to-categorize texts—fascinating texts, but with various loose ends.⁸³ Moshe Bernstein’s comments may be taken as exemplary for the scholarly perplexity at these texts:

We have to realize that the fundamental problem with 4Q159 is not what we name it or to what genre it belongs, but rather “what is it?” There is very little about this text which is straightforward or obvious, neither its selection of laws, nor its relationship to the Bible, nor the diverse ways in which the laws are rewritten.⁸⁴

Why was this material brought together? As we approach these texts with our notions of textual unity, they defy our categorizations. Texts such as 4Q159 and 4Q265 do not have the level of cohesion or sustained argument that we seem to expect on the basis of compositional unity: what is the underlying system? Thinking from the perspective of reading culture explored in this article, should we perhaps understand 4Q159 and 4Q265 instead as reflecting a collection of issues that are put together for discussion, without necessarily being interconnected? Perhaps we should not see such written manuscripts as the end result of a compositional activity, but rather as the materialization or textualization of reading culture in which reading, writing, and studying together as a scholarly group activity went hand in hand.

If we think of the movement behind the Dead Sea Scrolls as an intellectual textual community, does a profile of a scholarly reader apply to all those involved in such a community? No, and there is no need to assume so. In his conceptualization of textual community, Stock explicitly takes into account that not all individuals in such groups were able to read, the important thing being they took part in discursive groups led by specialized interpreters that were literate (see above). Hempel also stresses that non-literates were part of the Dead Sea Scrolls textual community.⁸⁵

As a final example of the deeply social character of ancient Jewish reading culture it may be instructive to consider the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1. The Genesis Apocryphon emphasizes Abraham’s wisdom and learning, pointing out that the pharaoh’s officials visited him to seek out his wisdom. The Genesis Apocryphon possibly also refers more specifically to Abraham’s

⁸¹ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 185.

⁸² Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 181–84.

⁸³ Moshe J. Bernstein, “4Q159: Nomenclature, Text, Exegesis, Genre,” in *The Mermaid and the Partridge: Essays from the Copenhagen Conference on Revising Texts from Cave Four*, ed. George J. Brooke and Jesper Høgenhaven, STDJ 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 33–55; Charlotte Hempel, “Cutting the Cord with the Familiar: What Makes 4Q265 *Miscellaneous Rules* Tick?” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar, JSJSup 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1:509–16.

⁸⁴ Bernstein, “4Q159: Nomenclature,” 51.

⁸⁵ Hempel, “Reflections on Literacy,” 80–81.

astronomical wisdom, as he is said to have read to the Egyptian officials (וקרית קודמיהון) from the book of the words of Enoch (1QapGen ar 19:24–25).⁸⁶ Here, as we have seen before, the reading is done aloud and the study, teaching and learning, takes place as a group event. One can envisage a setting in which Abraham has the scroll from which he read in front of him and, while occasionally halting his reading, gave comments and explanation, and that the Egyptian officials may at times have interrupted Abraham's reading to ask questions, debate, or have a passage reread for a better understanding. All this may even have taken place within the social context of a dinner, as was often the setting for group reading events with Roman elite reading groups. But the reference to much eating and drinking of wine in 1QapGen ar 19:27 is too fragmentary to ascertain this detail. The passage from the Genesis Apocryphon is thus another example of the elite reading culture envisaged in ancient Judaea. A wide range of books, not limited only to those that would become biblical books, were read aloud and studied together.

The text strikes back and takes centre stage, as it were. In this article, I have not been concerned so much with the exact nature of these texts or books, or how they were transmitted. These aspects have received much scholarly attention over the last few years. My concern here has been to recover what we may know about the reading of books or texts when this activity was central to social activities such as group reading events, and to understand the details of a particular reading culture. I have argued that in the intellectual reading culture in Hellenistic-Roman Judaea as reflected by the Dead Sea Scrolls, reading, writing, and memorizing were intertwined aspects—part of the procedure of reading as a multi-dimensional activity—and occurring in deeply social contexts of group reading and study of texts.

⁸⁶ For Abraham as teacher of astronomy and astrology, see the references in Popović, "Networks of Scholars," 167 n. 35.